527

TWO SERMONS

UPON THE BENEFITS OF INCORPORATED

CHARITY SCHOOLS.

BY

EDWARD OWEN, M.A.
RECTOR OF WARRINGTON.

[Price One Shilling.]

BRITISH
MUSEUM

Chriſtian Knowledge an univerſal Privilege:

A

SERMON

PREACHED OCTOBER 20, 1778,

WITH A DESIGN OF PROMOTING A

CHARITY SCHOOL IN WARRINGTON,

FOR THE PURPOSE OF

CLOTHING, SUPPORTING AND EDUCATING

POOR CHILDREN,

UPON AN INCORPORATED PLAN,

UNTIL THEY ARE FITTED FOR BUSINESS.

Second Edition, with ſome neceſſary Alterations.

By EDWARD OWEN, M.A.
RECTOR OF THE PARISH.

WARRINGTON,
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MDCCLXXXII.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IT is neceſſary to acquaint the reader, that there had been in Warrington, for many years, previous to the preſent deſign, a well-ſupported and uſeful Charity School for the purpoſe of clothing, educating and apprenticing poor boys; but that in the year 1778 *the Truſtees formed a deſign of extending the Charity to poor girls, and conducting the education of both, upon an incorporated plan, as a mode of improvement, eſpecially in point of morals. This deſign, however, requiring a large building, and other expenſive accommodations much beyond the finances of the Charity; nothing was at firſt intended but to increaſe the fund gradually by annual collections at the church and chapel, and to truſt to time for ſucceſs. In purſuance of this view, the firſt of theſe two ſermons was preached, and in the beginning of the year* 1779 *was afterwards publiſhed, and, by the ſale of a large impreſſion, through the partiality of a charitable public, raiſed near £*60, *beſides the collection at the church; and, what was ſtill more fortunate, a generous emulation took place: liberal benefactions poured in upon the Truſtees, in the manner alluded to in the ſecond ſermon, beyond their firſt hopes and expectations; a convenient and elegant edifice was by theſe means actually erected, and is juſt now opened upon the projected plan, and goes on with a ſucceſs that promiſes much greater degrees of perfection.*

Both ſermons are now, by the advice of ſome friends, printed together; as they may perhaps ſerve to continue the ſame laudable ſpirit in this town, and poſſibly promote ſimilar inſtitutions in other places where this excellent mode of Charity is unknown.

WARRINGTON, *Feb.* 18, 1782.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A

CHARITY SERMON, &c.

MATT. xi. 5.

The poor have the goſpel preached unto them.

IT is an exalted pitch of humanity, peculiar to the goſpel, to conſider virtue and knowledge as the univerſal concern of mankind. Though the Jews might have known better from their law, yet, even among them, the common people were not ſufficiently enlightened; being *ſcattered abroad as ſheep without a ſhepherd, having the key of knowledge taken from them, and the kingdom of heaven ſhut againſt them.** Among the heathens their condition was ſtill more deplorable. For they were conſidered as totally unworthy of knowledge. Philoſophy and ſcience were induſtriouſly kept from them as *myſteries* above their ſtation and capacity. *Away with the profane vulgar* was the firſt maxim of initiation. And thus the great poſſeſſed their knowledge, as they did their riches, for oſtentatious ſhow; and the poor, excluded and deſpiſed, lived in darkneſs and corruption.

* Matt. ix. 36. Luke xi. 52. Matt. xxiii. 13.

THE goſpel is meant to give us benigner tempers, a kinder and more generous conduct. It conſiders all men as *brethren*, in a ſtate of moral equality, though diverſified in worldly rank for the ſake of preſent order; poſſeſſed alike of immortal ſouls, equally capable of uſeful knowledge, equally capable of ſalvation.

AND it has accordingly provided for the common inſtruction of all orders by its *public* ordinances; and for ſuch exigences as ordinances cannot reach, by its calls upon the voluntary charity of *private* Chriſtians. And of this latter kind the eſtabliſhment of ſeminaries for the purpoſes of education will appear to be, if we conſider,

1. THE nature of the goſpel as a written ſyſtem of religion.

2. THE neceſſity of our concurrence with the means of grace.

3. THE fitneſs of ſuch ſeminaries for the beſt purpoſes of morality and religion. And,

4. THE caſualties and diſtreſſes incident to parents, to whom the buſineſs of education originally belongs.

I. THE goſpel is a *written* law, expreſsly *given for our learning*;* and an *univerſal* law, expreſsly deſigned *for the ſalvation of all men.*†

* Rom. xv. 4. † Tit. ii. 11.

THERE

THERE is a time in the counſels of God, when Chriſtianity ſhall be the univerſal religion of the world, when *the earth ſhall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the ſea.** How, indeed, his myſterious providence will bring about this great and glorious ſcene, whether by altering the faculties of men, or increaſing the evidences of truth, or by greater communications of grace; this we cannot at preſent conceive or underſtand. But this we may certainly know: the beſt mode of inſtruction in the preſent ſtate of things is an honeſt and diligent ſtudy of the word of God. Illiterate people with reſpect to a written law are nearly like the blind with reſpect to light; quite impotent of themſelves, and at the mercy of other people's humours and intereſts, (things, which often know no mercy,) to be led right or wrong at their diſcretion. An unhappy ſituation, of vile and wretched dependence! an inſolence of power, too great to be veſted in frail and corrupt creatures like ourſelves!

IT is therefore the generous object of the goſpel, that all men ſhould learn their duty by their own enquiry, juſt as they walk in ſecure and happy independence under the direction of their own eyes. And this is what we may call the *perfection of Chriſtian knowledge*; and is like that perfection of *Chriſtian morals*, to which we all acknowledge ourſelves to be called, both in our private and collective capacity. Neither

* Iſaiah xi. 9.

is ſtrictly attainable; but we muſt approach them both as nearly as we can. Thus the church is ſuppoſed to be *without ſpot or wrinkle*;* thus private Chriſtians are commanded *to be holy as God is holy*, and *to walk in the ſteps of Chriſt*;† not that we can reach this great ſublime of duty, but that, copying with noble emulation after a ſpotleſs pattern, we may aſcend as high as poſſible in the ſcale of moral perfection. The caſe is the ſame with reſpect to knowledge. *All God's people cannot be prophets*;‡ multitudes of Chriſtians will and muſt remain illiterate from many cauſes under the beſt preſent advantages, and *muſt ſeek the law at his mouth whoſe lips ſhould preſerve knowledge*;‖ and, to be ſure, under proper circumſtances, they may *ſeek* it too with proper advantage. But ſtill, this does not leſſen the duty of extending the means of ſelf-inſtruction. The more there are, who can ſee their duty with their own eyes, the perfecter will the ſtate of religion be among us, according to the exalted ſtandard of a written law, given for univerſal inſtruction. If this were not the caſe, ſcriptural knowledge would not be the ſubject of an univerſal precept; whereas, we find, on the contrary, that we are all without exception required *to ſearch the ſcriptures, to know them from our childhood, and to receive them with meekneſs* and other teachable diſpoſitions.§ Literary inſtitutions, therefore, are plainly of the

* Eph. v. 27. † Matt. v. 48. 1 Pet. ii. 21.

‡ Numb. xi. 29. ‖ Malachi ii. 7.

§ John v. 39. 2 Tim. iii. 15. James i. 21.

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very eſſence of the goſpel: to be a Chriſtian, and to know letters, are nearly equivalent terms; and to render letters ſubſervient to ſalvation by making God's word our ſtudy and delight, by walking in the ſpirit of it, and ſpreading the knowledge of it among our neighbours to the utmoſt of our ability, is aiming at the great *end of our calling*, perfection.

I COULD wiſh to reſt the point here, becauſe a farther diſcuſſion of it, like many of the other evidences of religion, leads us into *abſtract reaſoning*, which the indolent and inconſiderate, though not otherwiſe ill-diſpoſed, ſeldom hear with pleaſure; and this indiſpoſition to ſerious argument is, by the way, one of the moſt fruitful ſources of infidelity. But as I would not leave a doubt upon one candid mind, I am tempted to advance one ſtep farther in this unpleaſing but neceſſary field of ſpeculation; and will endeavour to be as brief and perſpicuous as I can.

WELL then; if you would not have all men to know their duty by reading; what mode of inſtruction would you chooſe? There are but three other ways conceivable in the nature of things; reaſon, divine illumination, and oral precept: reaſon, the Deiſt's indulgent idol; illumination, the Enthuſiaſt's fantaſtic guide; oral precept, the Ritualiſt's inſtrument of impoſture.

INDEED it is not to be denied, nay, it is to be inſiſted upon, that theſe three ways have their proper uſes;

uſes; for a written law can be only underſtood and explained by reaſon properly cultured and exerciſed, corrupt nature muſt be aided by grace, and oral precept muſt be the inſtructor of the illiterate. But then it muſt be obſerved at the ſame time, that reaſon, uninſtructed from above, knows only the things of this world, varies with men's varying humours and capacities, and wants, even in what it knows, a controuling authority; illumination, truly underſtood, only concurs with other means; and oral precept is liable to miſapprehenſion and impoſture, and conſequently to infinite illuſions.

A WRITTEN law is clear of theſe defects. Coming down, as it does, *from the Father of lights*, it enlarges our knowledge: carrying before it a name of awful authority, it commands our attention, and controuls thoſe paſſions and prejudices which are apt to draw our reaſon aſtray: it ſpeaks one uniform language in all places and ages: it ſpeaks not to the ear only, a fallacious organ; it ſpeaks to the faithful eye: it is a fixt and viſible criterion, to which an appeal lies againſt our own and other people's errors: while it enlightens the judgment, it reſtrains the imagination from looſe and wild conjectures; and while it employs the mind in habits of conſideration and induction, it ſtrengthens reaſon (a torpid faculty, when unexerciſed) and prepares it for other intellectual exertions, and is thus, in given circumſtances, even an improver of civil life.

I AM

I AM aware of the objection, that is riſing in your minds. You will ſay, that there may be, and actually are, infinite diſputes about the meaning even of written laws. And this is true, but takes not, however, from their ſuperior value. Let men err as much as they pleaſe, ſtill a written law is a fixt land-mark to diſcriminate things. The tide of conflicting paſſions may cover and overwhelm it, but they cannot obliterate its characters or deſtroy its authority. Let the corrupt billows of human depravity rage as they pleaſe, this *faithful witneſs* ſtill remains to ſpeak its proper language to the candid and diſpaſſionate, and even to the contentious themſelves when paſſion and prejudice ſubſide.

THUS the matter appears to be upon the cleareſt footing of reaſon; a written law has infinitely the advantage of the other methods of inſtruction. And if we examine the religious hiſtory of mankind, we ſhall find that *fact* ſpeaks ſtill more clearly and deciſively in favour of this concluſion. God has actually tried the other three ways already, as it were, on purpoſe to convince us of their inſufficiency.—I ſpeak this, I hope, with due reverence; for it is plain to any enquirer that there is a *gradual improvement* of human nature going on; and whether we trace this improvement from a *fall*, or an *original creation* deſigned for a *progreſſive perfection*, there is little or no difference, if we but conſider the Divine preſcience.—I repeat it then, again, God has tried the other three ways, as it were, on purpoſe for

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our inſtruction. In the firſt place, reaſon was tried in paradiſe, and failed; unhappily failed, as we experience this day in the evils of life. Tradition was then tried in the patriarchal times; the tradition, I mean, of acceptance by a *Mediator* in the uſe of ſacrifices. This alſo failed, though aided with the other two helps, reaſon and grace, at the ſame time: ſacrifices indeed continued and increaſed with various accumulations of folly and illuſion; but the religion annexed to them was loſt, and idolatry and corruption overſpread the earth. A choſen people were then called to be the inſtruments of introducing the promiſed Mediator into the world in the deſtined time of Providence, and a *written law* was given. It was given; but with progreſſive improvements for our inſtruction. It was firſt given as a family religion, upon what we may call an *independent* plan. For though Moſes required the people to go thrice a year to the tabernacle, yet as they were under no general authority, and the exerciſe of religion was veſted in the heads of families, the conſequence was, that, during all the times of the judges, anarchy prevailed, and *every one*, according to the honeſt impartiality of the ſacred page, *did what was right in his own eyes.**

In the mean while, the knowledge of letters paſt from hence into other countries;† and Greece, in

* Judges xxi. 25.

† Gale's opinion, that the alphabet, which was afterwards carried into Greece by Cadmus, was invented by Moſes, is the moſt probable of all the opinions I meet with upon the ſubject. Court of the Gentiles, B. I. C. x.

particular,

particular, with its native ingenuity, applying them to civil life, was preparing to improve the world by *arts* and *ſciences*, as the Jews were deſigned to do by *religious knowledge*.

But religious knowledge required further helps. Hence then, to the former plan were ſuperadded, by the prophet Samuel, *religious ſeminaries*, called in ſcripture *the Schools of the Prophets*. And proportionably important were their uſes. They extended the knowledge of the true God more widely; and guarded, beyond paſt experience, againſt the contagious idolatry of the neighbouring nations. But, even theſe partial remedies being inadequate to the corruptions of the age, God ſaw it neceſſary at laſt to purge his people in the furnace of affliction, and accordingly delivered them into the hands of the Babylonians. And this had its effect. From this chaſtiſement they now returned as utterly averſe, as before they were prone, to idolatry. And if you will enquire into the cauſe, you will find it upon the beſt authority to be the extenſion of their written religion;* "they had the prophets every week and in "every city conſtantly read to them, in ſynagogues "erected for that purpoſe, after the Babyloniſh cap-"tivity."

* This is proved by Thorndike, on Religious Aſſemblies, Prideaux's Connection, P. I. B. vi. and Cruden's Concordance, article ſchool and ſynagogue.

THUS things ſtood, when the Meſſiah came. The Greeks and Romans were highly civilized, but ſtill in religious darkneſs; and the Jews, their inferiors in the arts of poliſhed life, were eminent proficients in divine knowledge; and both happy effects aroſe from the cultivation of letters, the gift of heaven for the improvement of the world.

BUT the higheſt ſtate of improvement was as yet to come, by the miniſtry of Chriſt, *(the Lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world,** the deſtined Light both of *Jews* and *Gentiles)* who, among other means of effecting this glorious purpoſe, raiſed up Evangeliſts and Apoſtles to write down his religion for the more certain information of all future times.†

THE zeal and piety of the primitive believers in the uſe of this ordinance are proverbial to this day. For we read "that common Chriſtians had the ſcrip-"tures in their hands; prized them above all trea-"ſures, and choſe to die rather than give them up to "their heathen perſecutors."‡

IN the following ages, Providence ſeems to have reverſed the ſcene for a time, as it were to convince us of the bleſſings of knowledge by the contrary evils; for a partial darkneſs was again permitted to ſpread, amidſt thoſe ſtruggles and convulſions which attended

* Rev. xiii. 8. † Luke i. 4.

‡ Bingham's Chriſtian Antiquities, B. XIII. C. iv. B. XVI. C. vi.

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the fall of the Roman empire, when *the ten horns** (according to the prophetic viſion) erected out of its ruins the preſent ſtate of the Chriſtian world. Letters were baniſhed, or confined to cloyſters; the laity were unacquainted with ſcripture or any other knowledge; ſtateſmen and kings could not read or ſign their names; and whatever ſcience remained was kept up by the genius and virtue of a few individuals here and there among the clergy.† And what was the conſequence? why, upon this general ignorance the court of Rome erected an inſolent and oppreſſive uſurpation over the deareſt rights of mankind, which even an honeſt and intelligent papiſt muſt execrate.

But the church of Chriſt, *againſt which the gates of hell‡ are not to prevail*, was but prepared for greater perfection by this trial. Printing, and other arts were ſtruck out in this dark age; the reformation took place; the ſcriptures were tranſlated and put into people's hands; ſcripture-ſtudy rendered the writings of Greece and Rome, thoſe monuments of taſte and genius, a neceſſary branch of ſtudy; and thus both kinds of knowledge, civil and religious, are now become parts of the goſpel ſyſtem, and enlighten the world with united rays beyond the example of all paſt generations. Hereſies and diviſions indeed ariſe from free enquiry; but the maſs of knowledge and perſonal righteouſneſs is increaſed, and a

* Daniel vii. 24. † Harris's Philological Inquiries, P. III. C. xiv.
‡ Matt. xvi. 18.

civilization

civilization is going on, which time cannot efface, but muſt gradually enlarge, until (as I ſaid before upon a Prophet's authority) *the earth ſhall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the ſea.* Thus both reaſon and experience concur in recommending the Sacred Writings to our ſerious attention and veneration!

To apply theſe obſervations, we need but conſider this plain caſe. We think bodily blindneſs a great evil. If we ſee a poor fellow-creature, to whom the cheerful face of day is as midnight, he moves our tendereſt feelings of compaſſion. If we ſee ſuch a poor creature wandering to the brink of a fatal precipice, there is no one among us who does not inſtantly ſtretch out a kind hand to reſcue him from deſtruction. Learn hence to pity a worſe darkneſs, the ſpiritual blindneſs of the mind: oh! ſave it from a worſe deſtruction, the miſeries of futurity! For it is to the *wants of the ſoul*, that the goſpel calls our particular attention!

WOULD you then act in the generous ſpirit of the religion which you profeſs? Encourage knowledge. Would you avoid ſuperſtition, credulity, or a brutiſh ignorance of your higher relations, your relation to God and a ſpiritual world? Encourage knowledge. Would you guard againſt your own errors in the moſt important of all matters, ſalvation? Study the ſcriptures. Would you guard againſt the errors and impoſitions of your teachers, frail and erring as they

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are like other men? Make the knowledge of ſaving truth as general and diffuſive as you can. Would you promote God's kingdom? Encourage the knowledge of his will. Would you love your neighbour as yourſelf? Let even the poor have the goſpel preached unto them. Would you adopt the moſt efficacious methods of accompliſhing theſe ends? Encourage ſeminaries adapted to the united purpoſes of piety and knowledge.

"But ſuppoſing all this to be true (cries the "lukewarm Chriſtian) what have I to do with the "reformation of mankind? Is not my own duty a "concern of ſufficient difficulty and importance? "Will not God bring about his own purpoſes with-"out my poor imperfect efforts?"—The proper anſwer to this queſtion leads us to conſider,

II. The neceſſity of our concurrence with the means of grace.

Our gracious Maker having given us the ſcriptures as the means of ſaving knowledge, expects it from our piety and benevolence to apply them to our own uſe, and communicate them for the good of others. This is the method of his natural providence; and it is but reaſonable to expect the ſame proceſs in his religious diſpenſations. For, though it is by his bleſſing that the ſeaſons revolve and the fruits of the earth increaſe, yet, we ſee, he leaves the application of their uſes to human care and culture. And though

he watches over all orders of ſociety with common tenderneſs, yet he inclines them to ſupport and aſſiſt one another by their inſtincts, relations and neceſſities, as well as by moral motives. Want is univerſally to be ſupplied from the fulneſs of thoſe who abound. The ſhallow unbeliever, indeed, walking only by ſight, and ſeeing nothing but viſible cauſes working around him, is led from hence to deny a Providence; but rational faith, though it acknowledges their agency as inſtruments, yet piouſly ſees the neceſſity of a *firſt mover* in all the amazing mechaniſm of this free, yet orderly ſcene of life and action. We can all readily acknowledge this in one inſtance: we can readily allow, that the weakneſs of infancy is to be guarded by our protection, and its ignorance informed by our inſtruction. It would become us to acknowledge the ſame in all other caſes, and apply it, particularly, to the diſpenſations of God's moral providence.

We *have the poor* (as our Saviour intimates) *always with us** for the trial of our faith and obedience. And if we make not their frailty and ignorance as well as their bodily wants the objects of our charity, we neglect the better intereſts of creatures *for whom Chriſt died*† and provided an eternal inheritance. If this be not the caſe, why are Chriſtians univerſally commanded *to ſeek one another's good, to edify one another, to bear one another's burdens, to teach and*

* Matt. xxvi. 11. † 1 Cor. viii. 11.

admoniſh

*admoniſh one another, to inſtruct thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, to warn the unruly and convert the ſinner?** What are theſe precepts but calls upon our charity to remedy thoſe defects, for which general ordinances cannot provide?

Go now, if you can, and think with the lukewarm Chriſtian, that the improvement of human life is no part of your concern! You cannot neglect this ſocial office without diſobeying Him, who *willeth not that any ſhould periſh; who will have all men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*†

Go and ſay with the ſceptic, if you can, that morals are not improved by knowledge; and that man is guided by his appetites in defiance of all advantages! But this is to be wiſer than God, who has plainly appointed *education* as the inſtrument of human improvement. It is to be wiſe above plain experience: for the licentiouſneſs of enlightened nations and ages (which is uſed as an argument againſt knowledge) is not among the ſtudious, grave, and ſerious; but among the ignorant, ſottiſh, unreflecting, and diſſipated: a taſte for reading carries ever along with it a modeſty, decency, and ſeriouſneſs, and (where the grace of God attends it,) a reverence for religion.

Or go and join the narrow policy of thoſe, who think knowledge *dangerous* to common people, and

* 1 Cor. x. 4. Rom. xv. 2. Gal. vi. 2. Col. iii. 16. 2 Tim. ii. 25. 1 Theſſ. v. 14. James v. 19.

† 2 Pet. iii. 9. 1 Tim. ii. 4.

lock up the Bible from their uſe! But the Almighty, who *gave us the ſcriptures for our learning*, foreſaw that *the unlearned and unſtable would wreſt them to their own deſtruction** by hereſies and diviſions. Theſe evils are but thoſe *tares that will grow up in the field*† of Chriſt, for the trial of our faith, and the exerciſe of our charity. It is better to bear theſe evils than ſuffer that ignorance to return, from which we are ſo happily emerged. Theſe evils will be gradually leſſening, as religion comes to be more ſtudied and underſtood. It is *ignorant perverſeneſs*, that breaks the peace of the church. They are the *unlearned* and *unſtable* (as we ſaw before) who pervert the ſcriptures to their own deſtruction. As humility and candour and other virtuous diſpoſitions prevail, the miſchiefs of blind zeal, buſy curioſity, and deſigning intereſt will decreaſe. The world will ſee the neceſſity of aſſiſting not thwarting the ſtanding ordinances of religion. There is nothing clearer in the ſcripture than that there is a *ſettled order* of inſtruction, admonition, and diſcipline (and the two latter all men the learned and unlearned want alike) for the purpoſe of edification. And as the world improves in morals and knowledge (and ſeminaries, the ſubject of our preſent conſideration, are the happieſt inſtruments of producing this effect) we ſhall learn to keep *the unity of the church in the bond of peace*; to keep order and zeal in perfect conſiſtency; and aid, as I ſaid before, not counteract the appointed methods of edification. And

* Rom. xv. 4. 2 Pet. iii. 16. † Matt. xiii. 25.

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as this happy temper is the particular object of religious ſeminaries; this leads me to conſider,

III. THE fitneſs of theſe inſtitutions to anſwer the beſt purpoſes of morality and religion.

THE meaneſt ſeminary, that but teaches the low accompliſhments of reading and writing is a *public good*; for it extends the ſphere of knowledge: that, which ſuperadds (what every one ought to teach) the tempers and principles of the goſpel, muſt be more extenſively beneficial; for it adds morals and conſcience to uſeful talents: but ſuch ſeminaries, as are contrived to anſwer theſe two important purpoſes at a ſafe diſtance from temptations, will operate almoſt with a moral certainty of producing every effect which humanity and piety can wiſh.

WHAT tend moſt to corrupt mankind, are the vitious cuſtoms and principles of the world. Hence thoſe goſpel precepts: *be not conformed to this world; pure and undefiled religion is this, to viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneſelf unſpotted from the world.** To converſe ſafely with ſo dangerous an enemy requires caution and reſolution. It is a taſk of difficulty for the fulleſt maturity of grace. How much, therefore, is it to be wiſhed, that youth could be formed to uſeful and virtuous habits at a ſafe diſtance from temptations, to prepare them for the world before they are engaged in its dangerous ſcenes? To

* Rom. xii. 2. James i. 27.

train them for the Chriſtian ſervice (ſo juſtly called a *warfare)* before they face the hazards of action? That the ſoftneſſes and blandiſhments of domeſtic indulgence may not counteract precept, and obſtruct the influences of wholeſome diſcipline? That nothing impure may be ſeen or heard by the opening mind to ſow the ſeeds of future profligacy?

We are often amazed to ſee young people turn out miſchievous and licentious after a very ſtrict and careful education. But the truth is, corruption begins much earlier than we commonly obſerve. The ſeeds of vice are ſcattered as it were around us, like the weeds entailed upon human labour by the fall; lighting unperceived and ſtriking root and vegetating where we think the ſoil quite clear and ready for a happier produce. 'Tis impoſſible to begin too ſoon, or guard the opening ſenſes with too much caution.

Do we not ſee that the rich and great dare not truſt their own weakneſſes in this important article of education? That they ſend out their children, at the expence of many a heart-felt pang and tender regret, to places of diſtant diſcipline and ſecluded inſtruction, to guard them againſt the dangers of a free commerce with the world? And have not inferior parents (to ſay nothing more harſh) the ſame failings and errors to endanger their children's virtue? And would it not be a bleſſing to have them alſo placed under ſimilar advantages of improvement?

INCORPORATED Charity Schools afford this convenience. Here literary and moral improvement go hand in hand. The very *firſt* propenſities are watched; and the diverſions ſuperintended. The diverſions are even rendered uſeful and improving; profiting, while they anſwer the real purpoſes of recreation. For they are generally ſome eaſy branches of buſineſs which at once provide for health by a pleaſing interchange and variety, and guard againſt the licenſe of leiſure, the parent of miſchief; eſtabliſh habits of induſtry; inſpire an early abhorrence of *eating the bread of idleneſs*, and give ſome idea at leaſt of a *general good* by contributing to the common ſtock.

OBSERVE at the ſame time how they guard againſt evils almoſt inſeparable from ſuperior places of education. To theſe, youth often go already hurt by bad habits; often the parents' folly and indulgences attend them thither, and counteract the ſalutary effects of diſcipline; often they corrupt each other by their numbers; the *head* is generally (and perhaps neceſſarily) a greater object of attention than the *heart*. But in incorporated ſchools where the parents have no improper influence, where the number admits of an uniform and equal ſuperintendence, and the profeſſed object are morals rather than literature; here there is nothing to fear but the common depravity of nature, and the *child once trained in the way he ſhould go*, either *will not depart from it when he is old*,* or his early eſtabliſhed habits and principles, like a chart

* Prov. xxii. 6.

or compaſs, (ſhould ſome violent temptation lead him aſtray) will ſoon reſtore him into the right track again.

THE gracious Creator has given his talents with a common promiſcuous hand to all conditions of men. The peaſant and the ſcholar have the ſame common faculties: the difference between them is entirely the effect of education. And where a genius really appears in common life, it is worth the culture. Every character of merit is an acceſſion to the public ſtock in a commercial ſtate, and in a life of ſuch viciſſitude where families are continually decaying and new ones are neceſſary to ſupply the vacancy. And ſometimes theſe inſtitutions do this public ſervice.

AT the ſame time, others will not be raiſed to a taſte and ambition above their level; for this indeed would be an inconvenience, and has been made by the enemies of religion an objection againſt charity ſchools.* But, as I ſaid, they will not in general be inſpired with ambitious taſtes and notions above their condition, the main object being to prepare them for honeſt and uſeful occupations in the lower departments of life. Knowledge, which is their *birthright* as Chriſtians, accompanied with the pious tincture they receive, will be ſo far from inſpiring them with a dangerous and immoderate ambition, that it

* MANDEVILLE in his Eſſay on Charity Schools: but his cenſure, as a profeſſed reviler, not only of religion, but of human nature itſelf, is the higheſt recommendation.

actually

actually teaches the contrary ſpirit of honeſt labour and contentment; and tends to make them ſhining examples of modeſt merit to others of the ſame rank and ſtation.

KNOWLEDGE, thus circumſtanced and directed, really tends to remove all the moral diſorders of common people. For theſe ariſe either from brutiſh *ignorance*, or rude *perverſeneſs*, or ungoverned *appetite*. And what are the proper remedies for theſe evils but habits of reflection, modeſty, ſubmiſſiveneſs, and ſelf-diſcipline?

EVEN a few good youths turned out into the world, with credit and advantage, ſo well prepared and accompliſhed, are a public bleſſing in point of example. Good men are a bleſſing in every rank. They excite a ſpirit of virtuous emulation around them; they put vice and profaneneſs out of countenance; and keep up the credit of religion.

IN a word, as there is guilt in giving offence and ſpreading corruption, ſo there is ſurely a reward for thoſe, who recover ſouls to God. *They that be wiſe ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteouſneſs as the ſtars for ever and ever.** And ſurely of all converſions the moſt ſignal, the moſt beneficent, is to tranſplant unguarded and friendleſs youth out of the deſtructive corruptions of the world!

* Daniel xii. 3.

TAKE

TAKE a view of one of theſe kind retreats, and acknowledge their utility in the pleaſure of the proſpect. Behold its little inhabitants, a decent, neat and cheerful train, reſcued from filth and nakedneſs and wretchedneſs of every kind; behold them repairing to their prayers, learning and labour at ſtated hours, with order and regularity; not cloyſtered here as an uſeleſs burden upon ſociety, but as candidates for the virtuous offices of life as well as for a happy immortality. And then imagine them (thus prepared) removed into the buſy ſcenes of the world, and acting there as living members of the church of Chriſt, ſhining among his ſervants with diſtinguiſhed luſtre, eminent lights and patterns in their ſeveral ſpheres, and *teaching the way of the Lord to others* by their exhortations and example: behold and imagine, I ſay, theſe delightful ſcenes; and learn to acknowledge (what I need no longer prove) the fitneſs of ſuch inſtitutions to anſwer the beſt purpoſes of morality and religion!

THERE is however one objection to this ſcheme ſtill remaining; and that is, that education belongs to the natural guardians of youth, the parents; and this will lead us to conſider,

IV. THE caſualties and diſtreſſes incident to the parental charge.

WHEN good parents and conſcientious ſponſors have done their parts, yet numerous diſtreſſes will ariſe from

from three fruitful ſources, *untimely death*, *poverty*, and *wilful neglect*.

How often are parents torn away in an untimely manner from their weeping families, leaving a promiſing race behind them in the bitterneſs of affliction, *helpleſs orphans*, wretched *outcaſts*, expoſed to periſh or to be corrupted, without ſome charitable interpoſition; and capable, by this kind aid, of being uſeful to themſelves and the world. And who can ſee this, and not wiſh to remedy the calamity?

How often are even well-diſpoſed parents encumbered with a train of children, improving the morals of ſociety by an example of *virtuous wedlock*, and increaſing its ſtrength by the uſeful fruits of a happy union; ſinking under the uſeful yet oppreſſive burden; rather objects of relief themſelves, than able to educate their fond yet painful charge, as love and duty would incline? And who can ſee this, and not wiſh to remedy ſo amiable a diſtreſs? Who would not prop and nouriſh the fruitful tree, which pines and ſinks under too generous and luxuriant a fertility?

And how many more parents are either too ignorant or brutiſh to educate their children as the good of mankind requires? Who would ſuffer corruption to deſcend as an hereditary evil, and multiply with a ſort of miſchievous increaſe through future generations? If the parents *ſin and do wickedly*, *yet theſe ſheep*,* theſe

* 2 Sam. xxiv. 17.

innocent

innocent ſufferers, theſe worſe than orphans, *what have they done*, that they muſt be loſt to the ſtate, to the church of Chriſt, and the better intereſts of eternity?

To parents dying early, and leaving an orphan family behind them; to parents ſtruggling with poverty and a burden of beloved children, I am ſure, the worſt ingredient in their bitter cup is diſtreſs between affection and poverty, duty and neceſſity.

Go to the cottage of the dying parent; tell him, the *helpleſs little ones* he is leaving behind him ſhall not want; and imagine if you can the tranſports of his heart, and love the charity that conveys ſo much joy. See how he lifts up his grateful eyes, and bleſſes God for raiſing him up ſo good a friend! In his raptures he forgets the pains of ſickneſs, and the fears of mortality! "I am content, he cries, if *my chil-* "*dren ſhall not be vagabonds, and beg their bread*, I am "content; I want no more; death, I defy thy ſting!"

Go to the cottage of another diſtreſſed with numbers, take but one out of his innocent ſmiling train, eaſe him but of one burden; let him ſee but one of them raiſed to the proſpect of a comfortable ſubſiſtence; and ſee how ſudden joy, above the refreſhing warmth of any cordial, invigorates his ſpirits and fills his gliſtering eye with grateful tears;—and learn to love the charity that adminiſters ſo much relief! What tranſports will you excite, what a generous

emulation

emulation and exertion of *his* endeavours, under *your* kind and animating example!

And though the educating of the children of idle parents may ſeem to be an encouragement to profligacy, yet who would not wiſh to reſcue them from an hereditary corruption; when the welfare of the ſtate, the purity of the church, and the ſalvation of ſouls depends upon our kindneſs?

The truth is, the right education of children is an univerſal concern. The love of God, our neighbour, religion, and our country can never employ themſelves on a greater object.

Is it our duty to live to God's glory? His glory lies in the obedience of his creatures; and what better ſeaſon than pliant childhood to form men to his obedience? Is it the buſineſs of charity to remedy the evils of life? And where will you find a greater evil than vice and ignorance; a greater bleſſing than a virtuous education?

It is indeed an aſſemblage of all the good offices of charity; it unites all its ſcattered rays; collects all its diſperſed waters into one refreſhing current. The common acts and praiſes of charity are, that it feeds the hungry, and clothes the naked, that it viſits the fatherleſs, and comforts the widow, that it gives eaſe to the ſick, eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and eaſe to the aching mind. Eminent and godlike acts

of

of beneficence I allow; *and yet ſhow I unto you a more excellent way.**

For, behold! the education of *poor children* does all theſe things, and yet does more: it *does* clothe the naked, feed the hungry, comfort the widow, relieve the fatherleſs: it takes in all bodily wants and infirmities, and yet does a deal more: it reaches to the wants and diſeaſes of the *mind:* it clothes and feeds and relieves and comforts this *better* part of man: it benefits not only a few individuals: parents, brothers, ſiſters, generations to come are intereſted in its effects: the preſent monuments of your bounty, ſtimulated by your example, may themſelves become eyes and feet and clothes and food and comfort to future poor; and ſpread the bleſſings of that charity, which they themſelves experienced, to thouſands in a future generation. To educate poor children is really at once to provide for the body and the ſoul, for ſociety and the church; for the preſent and future ages: it provides virtuous and uſeful *citizens* for this world, and *bleſſed inhabitants* for the kingdom of God.

But I am treſpaſſing on your patience.—

If I have ſaid enough to convince your *judgments*, it will be unneceſſary to attempt your *paſſions*. The fictitious importunity of art-taught perſuaſion is impertinent in ſuch an age, where piety is already in-

* 1 Cor. xii. 31.

clined

clined to give. I will therefore only add, what ſometimes eſcapes modeſt Chriſtians. Having perhaps but a little to give, they are aſhamed to give that little, and to diſgrace a great cauſe by an humble pittance. Modeſty often reſtrains the effuſions of pious zeal. But the meaſures of charity are every man's honeſt ability. *As God has proſpered every one, ſo let him give: he that hath pity on the poor,* (ſays the wiſe man) *lendeth unto the Lord: inaſmuch as ye have done it unto one of the leaſt of theſe my brethren,* (ſays our Saviour) *ye have done it unto me.**

O GRACIOUS condeſcenſion! Indulgent Maſter! The charitable man, we ſee, is *emboldened* to conſider even his *God* and *Saviour* as his *debtor*; to reflect, that, while he relieves the poor, he is *relieving*, *refreſhing*, and (I hope I ſay it without irreverence) even *obliging* that Saviour, in whoſe merits and favour alone ſinful duſt and aſhes can hope for immortality!

IN the mean time a peculiar bleſſing attends and comforts him through life. Some how, though he *enlarges his bowels* beyond his fortune, though he ſeems to diſtreſs and impoveriſh himſelf, though he *has but a handful of meal in his barrel, and a little oil in his cruſe*, yet ſome how the widow's miracle is every day fulfilled, *his barrel of meal never waſtes, and his cruſe of oil never fails:*† the ſcripture promiſes are ever

* 1 Cor. xvi. 2. † 1 Kings xvii. 12.

verified;

verified; *the liberal ſoul ſhall be made fat, and he that watereth, ſhall be watered alſo himſelf. He that hath pity on the poor* (ſo far from loſing what he gives) *only lendeth unto the all-bounteous Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.**

We cannot truſt our wealth in better hands. God will ever remain; ever willing and ever able to reward us, when this earth has vaniſhed away, with all its frail inhabitants and poſſeſſions together.

* Prov. xi. 25. xix. 17. Matt. xxv. 40.

3 FE 64

THE END.

A

SERMON

PREACHED UPON THE OCCASION OF OPENING A

CHARITY SCHOOL

IN WARRINGTON.

BRITISH
MUSEUM

The Resources of Christian Charity:

A

SERMON

UPON THE OCCASION OF OPENING A

CHARITY SCHOOL

IN WARRINGTON,

FOR THE PURPOSE OF

CLOTHING, SUPPORTING AND INSTRUCTING

POOR CHILDREN,

UPON AN INCORPORATED PLAN,

UNTIL THEY ARE FITTED FOR BUSINESS,

PREACHED ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1782.

By EDWARD OWEN, M.A.
RECTOR OF THE PARISH.

PRINTED BY W. EYRES;
And sold by HIM, Mrs. BANCKS, and W. ASHTON, WARRINGTON;
and T. LOWNDES, LONDON: Price 6d.
With great Allowance to such as buy any Number to give away.
A Few upon fine Writing Paper; Price 1s.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO

Mr. WATKINS and Mr. DANNETT,

THE ACTING TRUSTEES OF THE

CHARITY SCHOOL IN WARRINGTON.

I PUBLISH this Sermon, with your approbation, in the plain unornamented language of the heart in which it was delivered, and in which, as I conceive, all diſcourſes ſhould addreſs themſelves to a mixt audience. To propoſe profits to the Charity from the ſale, were an idle project. The ſucceſs of my former more elaborate, and therefore worſe piece, was owing to the zeal and aſſiduity of our diſtant friends; to whom the Charity is much more obliged, than to the author whom they patroniſed, and whoſe names, as being too numerous for this place, muſt be gratefully recorded elſewhere by us—though Mr. Heſketh of Liverpool, in particular, muſt be thanked

here alſo for his ſingular ſervices. But this mode of begging admits not of a repetition. Sermons (occaſional ones eſpecially) being grown trite and common, have drawn upon themſelves the uſual conſequence of familiarity; they are paſt by with contempt, or twirled over with cold indifference. I have, however, another view, which may poſſibly ſucceed.

CHARITABLE as our age and country are, I do not think the reſources of charity, according to the pureſt principles of the Goſpel, are yet generally underſtood, or at leaſt fully exerted. I pretend not indeed to preciſion. But the hints I have thrown out with unpoliſhed plainneſs, may be ſufficient, perhaps they may be the beſt method. My preſent object and ambition, therefore, (beſides a little vanity, which I muſt own, of appearing uſeful in ſo laudable an undertaking,) is, that ſome perſons may be found, who will agree with me in ſentiments, and condeſcend to buy and diſperſe this diſcourſe upon

upon the eaſy terms mentioned in the title page, and that others may ſubmit to read it with patience and attention. Poſſibly, by this means, it may have its uſe; by diſperſing the ſeeds of charity more widely than it could from the pulpit, and producing a more plentiful harveſt in ſome future time.

THE contributors at large will not, they cannot in juſtice be diſpleaſed, that I particulariſe a few out of their number. You, whoſe zeal is the firſt movement in our machine, can atteſt the truth of what I aſſert. It is ſufficient for all, that the memory of their benefactions will be perpetuated, where it ought to be, in the grateful records of the charity—their reward they will expect elſewhere—But I could not forgive myſelf, if I had not *paid* this particular *tribute* of praiſe, *where the tribute was due.*

I ADDRESS it to you, in preference to other contributors, though ſome of them

are your ſuperiors in rank; becauſe we are indebted to your ſpirit for much that has been done, and expect much more from you in future.

THIS public ſpirit of yours, and your many private virtues make me, with great truth and eſteem,

Dear SIRS,

Your affectionate

humble Servant

WARRINGTON, *Feb.* 4, 1782. E. OWEN.

P. S. SINCE I wrote the above, I am authoriſed to inform the public, that Mr. Eyres gives half the expence of print and paper, and an anonymous benefactor gives the other half.

A

CHARITY SERMON, &c.

2 THESS. iii. 13.

Be not weary in well-doing.

WELL, (bleſſed be God!) the Charity we have been long praying for with ſolicitude, is at laſt eſtabliſhed; eſtabliſhed with the moſt auſpicious omens, the moſt encouraging proſpects of ſucceſs! What fruits, what bleſſed fruits may we not expect from it! What heart dilates not at the pleaſing ſight! What generous boſom throbs not with tranſport!

1. BUT I muſt collect myſelf. Though it becomes us to rejoice; yet our joy muſt be religious. We muſt look up beyond *ſecond* cauſes, and acknowledge God as the firſt author of this bleſſing. This will conſecrate what we have done; and entail upon it the beſt of patronages, the Divine favour. And, if God's providence over-rules and directs all things; if he makes even the *wills* of men, without deſtroying their freedom, ſubſervient to his own wiſe and good purpoſes (and this we learn amongſt the firſt rudiments of Chriſtian knowledge;) we muſt certainly ſee and acknowledge

acknowledge his propitious hand in the preſent kind event, which ſo far tranſcends our firſt hopes and wiſhes. It is the buſineſs of piety to acknowledge his agency in every thing, but in the *guilt* of wicked purpoſes and wicked deeds.

As the foundation, then, of our thankfulneſs to God, it muſt ever be remembered among us, that our firſt efforts for a long time were but feeble, almoſt ineffective; and that a ſudden unexpected offer of a moſt liberal donation from a worthy and exemplary neighbour,* and another conſiderable donation from another excellent perſon† who is but very ſlightly connected with this town, gave life and vigour to our languiſhing deſign; and the emulative exertions of many among ourſelves, *according to their power*, yea, and in ſome inſtances *(I bear them record) beyond their power*, have conducted it, as we ſee, to the happieſt iſſue. We have now nothing to do (after firſt thanking God, and our benefactors next) but to carry on with ſpirit, what has been ſo *auſpiciouſly*, and, I muſt add, ſo *providentially* begun.

2. A LITTLE from a great number of contributing hands, forms a great aggregate. A little thus united, will do great good, without any perceptible inconvenience to benevolent individuals.

EVERY thing great and uſeful on earth is the work of time; of ſlow and gradual increaſe. A man could

* John Blackburne, of Orford, Eſq. † Mrs. Bold, of Bold.

not

not imagine beforehand (if he had not experience to convince him of the fact) that the ſtately tree, which comforts him with its nutritious fruits and hoſpitable ſhade, ever ſprang from a diminutive ſeed. And yet the gradual operation of nature effects it; and is a call upon human emulation in all attempts which are truly laudable. It is a certain fact, that the greateſt Charities in this kingdom have ariſen, with parity of growth, from ſmall beginnings; and have been improved to their preſent degree of magnificence and utility, by the united efforts of private Chriſtians.

And indeed the effect is natural. For charitable inſtitutions being once eſtabliſhed, once embodied, and once rendered objects of public notice, their viſible effects ſpeak for them, though with ſilent, yet an irreſiſtible force of perſuaſion. From the experience of their benefits, a generous emulation is excited; the kindly inſtincts are awakened; a contagious ſpirit, as it were, of liberality ſpreads; many a good heart, hidden to our eyes under the veil of human infirmities, catches the ſocial flame; and (what is ſtill more unſeen and yet as ſure) God ſecretly co-operates with good deſigns; and, with myſterious goodneſs, raiſes up reſources beyond our firſt hopes or conceptions. And hence comes the pleaſing effect; that eſtabliſhed charities do ſo much good: like rivers of ſettled courſe, they are augmented by the influx and acceſſion of tributary ſupplies, as they flow downwards and continue their beneficent progreſs.

In the mean time, we muſt not neglect our part. God expects our co-operation. We muſt exert ourſelves to keep up the emulative ſpirit, and augment the refreſhing current, both by the cheerfulneſs and the largeneſs of our contributions. And this mode, in particular, of annual collection is obvious and eaſy of execution.

3. St. Paul lays down the following rule. *Let a man labour, working with his hands the thing that is good*, i. e. let him follow ſome honeſt occupation with honeſt diligence; *that he may have* (continues the Apoſtle) *to give to him that needeth.* [Eph. iv. 28.] Here we are commanded, you may obſerve, to labour, as Chriſtians, for the purpoſes of CHARITY, as well as *prudence* and *convenience*. The meaneſt occupation is not exempted from the duty of beneficence. We muſt labour not only for our own maintenance, but that we may have ſomething *to* GIVE; ſomething to give to our SUFFERING brethren; to thoſe, on whom the LOT OF TRIBULATION falls in this *probationary* world.

We may, at leaſt, learn from this ſcripture precept to give, if not from our *conveniences*, yet from our *ſuperfluities*; and even this will provide abundant reſources for moſt caſes of diſtreſs. There are hardly any orders among us (except the *abſolutely neceſſitous*) who have not ſome kind of idle and ſuperfluous expences, which they may occaſionally retrench; and to make but a *temporary* deduction from our uſual eaſe

and

and comfort of living, for the ſake of contributing to an uſeful charity, will be an act of virtuous ſelf-denial; and, as ſuch, a ſacrifice truly acceptable to the moſt High.

And is it much, I pray you, for the affluent to exerciſe this generous ſelf-denial amidſt the comforts of their abundance? When they are bleſt by God with plenty and variety of all conveniences; is it much to deny themſelves for a while, in a ſmall degree, for the ſake of doing a permanent and extenſive act of mercy? Is it much to exchange the grovelling, the fugitive pleaſure of mere appetite—for the refreſhing and laſting rapture of a beneficent deed, generouſly intended to convey happineſs, duteouſly conformed to the Supreme Will?

I own, the diſtinctions of ranks and ſtates muſt be ſupported. The order of the world requires it. But to live up to the extent of our inflamed appetites, is neither neceſſary, nor prudent, nor becoming us as men; whatever it may be in point of idle glare and cumbrous magnificence. Œconomy and temperance are Chriſtian virtues of the firſt magnitude. And if we regulate our expences by theſe virtues, I am ſure, the order of the world may be kept up, and yet ſufficient proviſion made for all exigences of innocent diſtreſs.

And with regard to the inferior claſſes; even well-diſpoſed people among them are known to diſſipate a deal of their profits, in the way of recreation; eſpecially at the cloſe of their weekly labours.

Not

NOT that I blame recreation, where care is taken to guard againſt *guilty exceſſes*. Bodily labour, like mental ſtudy, may innocently relax itſelf: after relaxation it returns with alacrity to its wonted employments. And yet, would it not be eaſy, even for this claſs of our brethren, to divert their idle expences into the bleſſed channel of beneficence? Their ſelf-denial (as I ſaid before) will make it a virtue, and the pleaſure of doing good will be their reward and refreſhment. Believe me, *benevolent* acts afford a refreſhment above all *animal* gratifications. Oh! how the boſom warms and expands itſelf, in the conſciouſneſs of doing a good deed! how the blood flows more briſkly through the throbbing heart! and charity may be literally ſaid *to be health to the navel, and marrow to the bones!*

WE need not therefore doubt of ſucceſs, if we conſider this charitable foundation as we ought, and exerciſe that liberality, to which all Chriſtians are called without exception.

THE only danger is, leſt what I ſay may be miſapprehended and give offence. Let me explain myſelf. The world have a ſtrange notion about ſuperfluities. They imagine that their wealth is their own, and may be ſquandered as they pleaſe; not conſidering that God and the poor have their claims upon them. Hence we ſee, the great man often thinks that a few pence (toſſed with an unkind diſdainful air) is a great charity, while he ſquanders away talents in a luxurious treat, wanton changes of dreſs, idle

jaunts

jaunts of pleaſure, and many worſe ways beneath the dignity of this place to mention. Hence alſo, the inferior artiſan ſtares at you with inſolent ſurpriſe, if you expect ſix-pence from him in charity, while he ſquanders away ſhillings, perhaps pounds, in looſe and profligate pleaſures. Hence too, he *wilfully* miſtakes the *relative* nature of opulence and poverty; though eaſy to be underſtood: for a great man may, in certain circumſtances, be the poor man, becauſe his rank requires as much as he has, or more; and an artiſan may be the rich man, becauſe many circumſtances may give him, what to *him* may be called abundance or ſuperfluity. But this man (when ſelfiſh) wilfully overlooking this plain obſervation, can with much ſelf-complacency exonerate himſelf, and leave it to thoſe others to do good, whom he is pleaſed, with artificial modeſty, to call abler than himſelf.

I AM no enemy, as I ſaid before, to the recreations of the poor, or the hoſpitality and diſtinctions of the rich. But certainly a temporary and occaſional deduction might be made by either of theſe orders from their expences with eaſe—I am ſure, with great advantage to their ſouls, and the better intereſts of futurity. No one, according to the rule of charity, needs diſtreſs himſelf. The rule is conciſe and full. *Be merciful after thy power; if thou haſt much, give plenteouſly; if thou haſt little, do thy diligence gladly to give of that little: for ſo gathereſt thou to thyſelf a good reward againſt the day of neceſſity.* [Tob. iv. 8.] A willing mind is the beſt interpreter of this rule; and

will

will be reſtrained by no conſiderations but thoſe of undiſſembled and virtuous inability.

By way of farther proof, let us advert to a plain fact. What large ſums do we ſee often raiſed by the voluntary aſſociations of our artiſans for the purpoſes of mutual ſupport, by very ſmall weekly proportions! How uſeful, how extenſive do we ſee them in their beneficial effects! Do but the ſame, once in the year, in its due and larger proportion, for the glory of God, and the benefit of your fellow-creatures, your neighbours, perhaps your *immediate ſelves* (for your children or relations, in the revolutions of time and the viſitations of an unſearchable Providence, may be the objects;) and great will be the effects of your liberality! What a greater bleſſing may you expect upon your kind contributions! Surely, the gracious Father of all, the gracious Giver of fruitful ſeaſons, who annually *renews the face of the earth*, and recruits the *waſtes* even of our *luxuries* and extravagances with the returning year's increaſe, will pour down his peculiar bleſſing upon what we *ſow* in good deeds! He has ſo promiſed, and we may ſafely truſt him.

The poſſibility, therefore, of ſupporting and increaſing the fund of our excellent inſtitution, if according to our duty (as we have juſt ſeen) we cooperate and exert ourſelves with ſpirit and vigour, is not to be doubted. It remains only to be conſidered, whether the object of it be really ſo important as to deſerve our zeal. Be this, then, our next conſideration.

4. Is

4. Is it a matter (let it be aſked) of ſuch immenſe conſequence, to have a public receptacle for the education of poor children? Is their education a matter of importance to the community? at leaſt might it not be carried on, upon its old foundation, without any other forms or aſſiſtances?

In anſwer to this, I muſt aſſert, that there is not a greater ſpecies of charity, carried on, this day, in the kingdom, than that of educating, clothing and ſupporting poor children. It is an epitome of all charities. It compriſes all their benefits, and is liable to no perverſion.

For pray, conſider. Do you think it charity, to relieve a poor, famiſhed, emaciated creature, begging a piece of bread at your door? Would you divide your *morſel*, to feed the miſerable creature who is ready to die for hunger? Would you ſtrip yourſelf almoſt of a *neceſſary garment* to cover a poor wretch ſhivering with cold, and ready to periſh in his nakedneſs? There is no one ſo hard-hearted as to refuſe theſe acts of common humanity. And yet, to educate and feed and clothe the children of the poor, is to do this in the higheſt degree. Here there can be no impoſitions, no deceit, no abuſe. Here that painful apprehenſion, that often repreſſes the ſweet ſympathy of the heart, the fear of encouraging the *worthleſs*, has no place: here is a certainty of doing good to the moſt deſerving of objects.

They are ſelected upon knowledge. They are admitted by a mode, that knows nothing of affection or

 diſlike,

diſlike, partiality or any poſſible influence. They are the children of your neighbours, whom you know, whoſe neceſſities you muſt commiſerate, who have even a legal claim to your aſſiſtance. Your charity falls, like a fruitful ſhower, where it is wanted: you ſee its effects with your eyes in the refreſhment it produces. You may look up to God, with humble confidence that he accepts of your pious oblations. You are imitating and obeying *him*, who delights to do good *himſelf*, and expects goodneſs from his *creatures* as the teſt of their faith and obedience.

NAY, I muſt not ſtop here. Bodily relief, though a great act of charity, yet is the ſmalleſt object of this generous inſtitution. Innumerable other advantages are to be expected from it.

YOUTH, it is well known, is the proper time of *education*—the greateſt of all bleſſings, the beſt of all inheritances, the ſource both of preſent and future happineſs. It is a pliant, flexible and teachable ſtate. It puts man under diſcipline, at the proper time of culture; before bad habits are formed amidſt the corruptions of the world. Vices have their infancy like men. At firſt, they may be eaſily reſtrained; but when time and habit have given them their full maturity; we find them, by fatal experience, too powerful for grace or reſolution, advice, perſuaſion, or reſtraint.

IT is therefore the wiſe man's advice; *train up a child in the way he ſhould go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.* [Prov. xxii. 6.] A well-trained child

child acquires a ſort of *amiable prejudice* in favour of virtue; a certain delicate ſenſibility, that *recoils* at foul deeds and conceptions; and this becomes a ſort of ſentinel to him to warn him of danger upon an inclination to go aſtray.

ADD to this, that the right education of the riſing age is one of God's great means of improving the world. To turn out young people upon the great theatre of buſineſs, well qualified for its occupations by knowledge and virtuous habits, is ſetting up ſo many lights and good examples for the improvement of their neighbours around them.

ONLY form, by way of illuſtration, the following ſuppoſition. Imagine a well-diſpoſed conſcientious man, labouring uſefully and regularly in ſome laudable occupation—following it with honeſt diligence and ſobriety—carrying his family at his ſide, on days of piety, with becoming gravity, to the houſe of God—reſtraining them on thoſe ſacred days from looſe and profane diverſions, and teaching them the fear of the Lord with real ſerioufneſs—employing them, during the week, in the acquiſition of ſome uſeful buſineſs or knowledge—imagine all the ſalutary fruits of this exemplary care—his children a comfort, bleſſing and ſupport to him—his affairs in an eaſy and flouriſhing ſtate—his houſhold in peace and plenty, decency and good order;—imagine, I ſay, theſe things: and have you not before your eyes the *full portrait* of the uſeful and laudable citizen in the inferior department of life? Is not the community benefited by this man's inſtructive example, and by the fruits of his humble, but amiable virtues?

AND muſt not, then, Charity Schools, which turn out their *multitudes* of ſuch characters into the world, be a public bleſſing? Yes, in proportion as we extend the ſphere of education, we extend human happineſs. We leſſen the ignorance, profaneneſs and profligacy, that create our greateſt diſorders. Give the young good principles, and they will be peaceful and uſeful members both of church and ſtate.

A HEATHEN writer could ſay, *Let nothing, impure either to the eye or ear, enter the doors where a child reſides.* And with what advantage muſt charity ſchools operate, where children are taken early from the infectious examples of wicked parents and neighbours, and carefully guarded againſt the inroads of infection? Where they are ſecluded, and kept at a ſafe diſtance from temptations? where their time is pleaſingly diverſified, between the ſucceſſive exerciſes of prayer, learning, induſtry, and neceſſary recreation? Where, in ſhort, they are trained up to health and ſtrength and manly vigour, to arts and commerce, to the virtues of ſocial life; and (what is the ground work of all) to a true ſenſe of God's authority?

WHAT, I pray you, can form human creatures either for the world or for heaven, better than this plan; if man be a *teachable* creature *at all*, which I ſuppoſe no infidel will deny?

5. BUT I muſt reſtrain myſelf. The time permits me not to indulge the pleaſing theme. I ſhall content myſelf, therefore, with obſerving but two things more.

You

You muſt ſee by what I have ſaid, that the religion, which this charity has for its object, is the ſpirit of *general* piety and virtue only; and I obſerve this for the ſake of the candid among ourſelves, and of thoſe of other perſuaſions who vouchſafe to mix with us upon this occaſion. The promoting of the particular views of parties, as parties, belongs to themſelves; and as far as they, upon *full enquiry*, think themſelves right, they are juſtifiable at the throne of mercy. But general religion, that general ſpirit of piety and virtue, which makes the good citizen and good candidate for heaven, is the common concern of all. God is the common Father of Jews and Gentiles, of all ſects and parties; and to promote his honour and ſervice is the common duty of all who acknowledge his being, and eſpecially his gracious revelation.

It is true indeed the mode of inſtitution, to be followed within thoſe walls, is that of the Church Catechiſm. But, it is certain, *ſome* form muſt be followed, and this catechiſm is, I think, generally acknowledged to be the moſt candid, ſimple, unexceptionable ſummary of moral truth in the Chriſtian world; being nothing but the fundamentals of Goſpel belief and practice, the pure unadulterated principles of general piety and virtue, in which all Chriſtians are or ſhould be agreed. It may be ſaid, indeed, that though the inſtitution itſelf be ſimple, yet many expoſitions of it take a wider compaſs, and graft upon it a great number of diſputed doctrines. But the conduct of charity ſchools neither admits of the leiſure nor power to teach any thing more than plain practical

practical religion, (happy were it, could they do this effectually!) and any one may know this to be the caſe by a little attention to experience. It is true alſo, nay, it is to be expected and to be wiſhed, that the young will acquire ſome habitudes of mind inclining them to the *eſtabliſhment* in that courſe of education;—and, I ſay this, becauſe, the poor of ſeparate ſects generally ſinking into the maſs of the community, the eſtabliſhment has the principal burden of relieving them, and acquires the principal right of forming their education;—but the candour and the genuine *catholiciſm* of the plan muſt incline them to a *tolerant* and lenient eſtabliſhment; and as this, I hope, is the wiſh of the wiſe and good of all parties, of all who *love peace, and turn not liberty into licentiouſneſs*, the charity demands of courſe (to recur to our firſt poſition) the common notice and patronage of all.*

I WOULD only farther obſerve, that many diſtinguiſhed characters in different parts of theſe kingdoms, have been thus educated—being at the ſame time ornaments to the community, and ſtanding monuments of the utility of theſe inſtitutions.

6. ENCOURAGE, then, a good work, ſo powerfully recommended to you by ſo many conſiderations both human and divine. Embrace the preſent opportunity of doing good. It may be (and this is a ſerious conſideration!) it may be your laſt. Many of us may be

* IT is a fact which ought not to be concealed (becauſe it tends to benefit the charity by a diſtinguiſhed example;) that Dr. Enfield, though a miniſter in the ſeparation, honoured theſe ſentiments by an expreſſive mark of his approbation, a liberal contribution, in which he has been followed by ſeveral of the principal members of his ſociety.

called

called away to our great account, before another anniverſary returns. Do good, therefore, while it is in the power of your hand. Lay up your treaſures in heaven againſt the hour of neceſſity. Say not, *what are the poor to me? why muſt I leſſen my wealth or my pleaſures, to ſerve I know not whom, perhaps idle and thankleſs aliens?*—Ah! uſe not this unkind and ungracious language. God makes both rich and poor. He alone gives the powers and opportunities of getting wealth; he gives it upon this expreſs condition, that we muſt aſſiſt our poorer brethren; and has made us of ſuch a nature, that to ſerve others, is to ſerve ourſelves in the trueſt manner. What you lay out upon your luſts, periſhes with the uſing; what you ſtore up with fooliſh unneceſſary providence, muſt he left behind you; perhaps to be the bane and ruin of thoſe that inherit it. But what you lay out in good deeds, goes before you into the world for which you are ultimately made, and will continue your own. Yes, you will find it depoſited in faithful remembrance with the Almighty, and repaid you with infinite increaſe in his eternal kingdom.

Oh! how blind, how miſerable the man, who dares not truſt God with his riches! Who, from poor motives of worldly prudence or worldly eaſe, provides not an inheritance in the world of Spirits, whither he ſoon muſt go; to live in miſery unutterable, if he makes not God his *friend!* The words of ſcripture are very clear and deciſive: *He ſhall have judgment without mercy, who ſhowed no mercy*; [James ii. 13.]

ii. 13.] and without God's mercy, we know, no ſon of Adam can be ſaved!

IF the terrors of the Lord cannot alarm you, let the glories of heaven invite you. Hear then, how our bleſſed Redeemer welcomes the charitable to their bliſs, and learn from hence to love and practiſe works of mercy!

Come, ye bleſſed of my Father—[will he ſay—*come and receive the recompenſe of your good deeds*] *I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirſty, and ye gave me drink; naked, and ye clothed me; ſick, and ye viſited me: Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!* [Matt. xxv. 34.]

MY brethren!—Be it our ambition to be enrolled among this triumphant company of ſaints in glory! May we make this our bleſſed choice! And ſtudy, above all *other* riches, to be, as the Scripture commands us, RICH IN GOOD WORKS! [1 Tim. vi. 18.]

THE END.

3 FE64

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